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A BOX OF MONKEYS

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Monograph

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A BOX OF MONKEYS

A Parlor Farce in Two Acts

BY

GRACE L. FURNISS

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BOSTON

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PS 3511
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CHARACTERS.

EDWARD RALSTON A promising young American, half owner of the Sierra Gold Mine
CHAUNCEY OGLETHORPE His partner, second son of Lord Doncaster
MRS. ONDEGO-JHONES An admirer of rank
SIERRA-BENGALINE Her niece, a prairie rose
LADY GUINEVERE LLANDPOORE An English prim-rose, daughter of the Earl of Paynaught

COSTUMES.—Modern and appropriate.



Gift
Dr. Julia M. Green
Sept. 29, 1928.

A BOX OF MONKEYS.

ACT I.

SCENE.—Drawing-room of MRS. ONDEGO-JHONES'S residence, 900 Fifth Avenue. Piano right. Sofa left. Table, with writing materials, right centre. Entrances—centre, right, left. Window left of centre entrance. Portières, pictures, chairs, etc., in handsome modern style.

Curtain rises on MRS. ONDEGO-JHONES at table, reading letter. SIERRA at piano, playing.

MRS. ONDEGO-JHONES (*laying down letter*). Very gratifying! Very kind of her ladyship. Sierra! Sierra! (Turns to SIERRA; gets up; shouts in her ear.) Sierra!

SIERRA (*jumping up*). Yes, aunt. I think so too.

MRS. O. You are strangely absorbed, miss. Pray, of what were you thinking?

SIERRA (*innocently*). Ted—er—I mean—

MRS. O. Is Ted a musical term?

SIERRA. I said ped, aunt. Short for pedal, you know.

MRS. O. (*eying her severely*). You are sure?

SIERRA. Quite sure. (*Aside*.) That's four fibs since breakfast. Oh, me!

MRS. O. Very good. Listen to this. First sit down. Never stand in that awkward style again. When will you learn repose? (*Sits by table*.)

SIERRA. Can't say, aunt. Drive on. (*Sits sideways on her chair, propping her chin on her hands*.)

MRS. O. Drive on! But what can one expect from a girl brought up by a man on a ranch? However, listen, Sierra. I have here a most gratifying letter from the Countess of Paynaught. Her ladyship accepts in the most friendly style my offer of hospitality, and proposes to leave her daughter, Lady Guinevere, in my care, while she continues her tour westward. Ah! little did I think when I made my

offer on the steamer that her ladyship would confide her daughter to me for the winter. Quite an honor, isn't it, Sierra?

SIERRA. Honor! I think it's beastly cheeky! You told me yourself that her *ladyship* snubbed you persistently from Liverpool to New York, and called you that Ondego-Jhones person.

MRS. O. Her ladyship's manner on the steamer, Sierra, was due to a contest between a plebeian ailment and an aristocratic digestive apparatus. In short, her ladyship was sea-sick. No one dreams of making sea-sick people accountable for anything they say.

SIERRA. I don't care! I would not have her daughter.

MRS. O. (*absently*). How well it will sound! Among other distinguished visitors were Mrs. Ondego-Jhones and her guest, Lady Guinevere Llandpoore. Delightful! I rather think that will take down Mrs. Newcome, who is insufferable on the strength of her puny little Italian count. The idea of my entertaining members of the English aristocracy will simply annihilate her.

(SIERRA becomes absorbed in seeing how far she can stretch her chewing-gum.)

MRS. O. Lady Guinevere arrives to-day; she can assist at Sierra's débüt to-morrow. I will write the notices for the society notes. (*Writes.*)

"Mrs. Ondego-Jhones introduced her fascinating niece, Miss Sierra Bengaline, at a *Kaffee-clash* yesterday afternoon. This German innovation proved a pleasant relief from the monotonous 'teas' in vogue." (*Aside.*) That's a slap at Mrs. Newcome's weak tea. (*Writes.*) "Lady Guinevere Llandpoore, only daughter of the Earl of Paynaught, assisted in receiving. Miss Bengaline, who was brought up in the distant West, brings the spicy atmosphere of her native prairies with her." I put that in, Sierra, to account for any atrocious thing you may see fit to do.

SIERRA. Good idea.

MRS. O. (*writes*). "Miss Bengaline was the recipient of numerous bouquets" — (*aside*) I shall order nine this morning — "and bids fair to be the belle of the season." (*Lays down pen.*) There, that will do, when the gowns are described and the names added. Now I must fly to the intelligence office, and secure at least three maids before lunch. Sierra,

what do I see? Remove that vile stuff from your mouth, and sit up.

SIERRA. Yes, aunt. (*Sticks the wad of gum on back of chair; sits up primly.*)

MRS. O. Pay attention! The butler Mrs. Campbell recommended is to come this morning. You will have to open the door and interview him. It looks dreadfully, but can't be helped, since cook is the only servant who didn't "strike" yesterday. Well, ask this man the usual questions, and, if he is at all presentable, engage him. (*Bell rings.*) Gracious! Is it possible Lady Guinevere has arrived? Run to the window and see.

SIERRA (*runs to the window; looks out; turns to audience.*) It's Ted, and aunt not gone. I'll beckon him to go. (*Waves her hands; shakes her head violently.*)

MRS. O. (*who has been collecting letters, eyeglasses, gloves, etc., turns, and sees SIERRA gesticulating.*) What are you doing? Think of the neighbors! Who is it?

SIERRA (*hastily drawing curtains and coming down front.*) It's no one, aunt.

MRS. O. (*severely*). What do you mean by making a—a semaphore of yourself for no one?

SIERRA. I meant no one in society, aunt. It was a—er—a kind of—er tramp, and I waved my hands to signify displeasure, and he went away.

MRS. O. I presume he thought you were a lunatic.

SIERRA. Yes, aunt. Auntie, if that English girl is coming to-day, don't you think you ought to hurry and get some servants? She won't believe your entire staff left in a fury; she'll think you never had any. The English are so supercilious, you know.

MRS. O. Yes, yes, I'm off. Don't forget about the butler, Sierra. (*Starts toward centre door; comes back.*) And, Sierra, con over that little abstract I made for you of light society talk. I don't want a tongue-tied *débutante* on my hands.

SIERRA. What a nuisance!

MRS. O. Nonsense! A girl has to work for popularity nowadays. Well, good-by. (*Kisses her. Exit c.*)

SIERRA. I thought she would never go. Now I will beckon Ted in. (*Runs to window; looks out.*) Heavens! They nearly ran into each other. It's lucky aunt don't know him by sight. She is glaring out the window as the carriage

turns the corner, and he is coming up the steps. I'll let him in. Isn't he a daisy! (Exit C.; returns with EDWARD RALSTON muffled in a large ulster.)

SIERRA. Ted, how could you ring the bell when there was no red book in the window? I had to tell aunt you were a tramp.

TED (laughing). I quite forgot the red book. The fact is— Look at me, Sierra! (Throws off ulster. Shows he is in evening clothes.)

SIERRA. Evening clothes in the morning! Oh! Oh, I see! Locked out.

TED (indignantly). Jove! Locked out! Nothing of the sort. I got up early, rushed off to have a picture taken in this rig to please you, and you reward me by the most injurious suspicions. I was never locked out in my life.

SIERRA. Always locked in?

TED. Sierra—

SIERRA. There, there, I won't tease any more, Ted. Don't let us spend our precious time in quarreling. Come, sit down, look pleasant and perfectly natural, and you'll see a little bird—that's me—with some news. (They laugh; sit on sofa, left.)

TED. Now for the news, you little witch.

SIERRA. You remember the Countess of Paynaught?

TED. No, I don't.

SIERRA. You do, Ted.

TED. I do not, Sierra.

SIERRA (firmly). You do, Ted. She's that disagreeable woman who called aunt the Ondego-Jhones person.

TED. Oh, I recollect! you told me about her. Well, what comes next?

SIERRA. Her daughter comes next. After insulting aunt for three thousand miles, her ladyship kindly invites her daughter to spend the winter with her—the Ondego-Jhones person!

TED. That's rather cool. I suppose your aunt regularly flattened her out—on note paper. Declined the honor with freezing sarcasm, eh?

SIERRA. On the contrary, she is delighted, because the wretched girl has a title, and will look well in print. She will arrive to-day, and assist at my débüt to-morrow. Ted (jumps up; seizes sofa pillow), I detest society! I feel parboiled, smothered in it. And I—don't—want—to—come

—out! (*Emphasizes each word with a thump on the sofa.*)

TED (*springing up*). Great Julius Cæsar! Sierra, I'm not society.

SIERRA (*laughs; walks to table*). You! - You're only a cowboy. Papa said so. Ted, shall you ever forget that dreadful afternoon when you rode over thirty miles to tell me you loved me, and papa found us spooning in the corral, and raved around, denouncing and cutting off, etc.?

TED (*going to her*). No; and I sha'n't forget how you stood up and defied him, like a brick—er—angel.

SIERRA. Brick angel?

TED. No, no; angel.

SIERRA. Oh, plain angel!

TED. No; like a fascinating little cherub with a good firm will of its own. Jove! how your eyes flashed when you said he might send you East, but you'd never, *never* give up Ted. (*Takes her hand*.) Sierra, I often wonder why you like me.

SIERRA (*coquettishly*). Why? Let me see. Well, you're very warm-hearted.

TED (*edging nearer*). That's so.

SIERRA. And I like your taste in—er—girls, and the shape of your nose, and you named your gold mine after me, and I'm so sorry it will not pan out. That's it. It's pity.

TED (*putting his arm around her*). Pity, Sierra?

SIERRA (*disengaging herself, runs to other side of table*). Gracious, Ted! don't put your arm around me, and say "Sierra" in that tone. It—it makes me nervous. (*Picks up papers*.)

TED (*walking up and down*). You took it coolly enough out on your father's ranch. Of course I was a fool to expect to hold you to our engagement. I'm only a poor fellow with a gold mine which won't pan out, confound it!

SIERRA. Oh, Ted!

TED. I see it all. To-morrow your aunt presents you to society, where you may meet some really eligible fellows. I knew there was something wrong when you didn't kiss me this morning.

SIERRA. Of course I didn't.

TED. Why of course? (*Stops in front of her*.)

SIERRA (*mischievously*). I wasn't invited.

TED (*rushing to her*). I'll take that kiss with interest, now.

SIERRA (*skipping round the table*). No, no! Please, really, Ted! I'm — I'm busy. (*Dips pen in ink, holds it out theatrically.*) One step nearer, villain, and I ink your immaculate bosom. But (*shyly*) if you'll give me a little time, I'll surely pay you.

TED. Honor bright?

SIERRA. Honor bright! Now, Ted, help me get up my "light society talk." You see, aunt is so afraid I shall say something original and paralyze her "set" to-morrow, that she has forbidden me to say "mustang," "ranch," or "poker," and prepared a few well-bred inanities for me to sling at the effete East.

TED. Is "sling at the effete East" one of them? (*Takes paper from SIERRA.*)

SIERRA. Oh, I'm using you as a safety valve! Now you go out, then come in with a hee-haw languid manner, don't you know, and I'll receive you Eastern style.

TED. All right. (*Goes out; comes back.*) Ready.

SIERRA. Wait till I am posed. (*Stiffens herself; crosses hands; holds her head on one side; smiles.*) Ready, Ted.

TED (*coming forward with affectation of languor, his eyes half shut*). Aw — chawrming day, Mrs. Ondego-Jhones. You always have chawrming days *on* your days. Is that chawrming girl your niece? Present me, pray.

SIERRA. Good! You don't look as though you knew enough to come in out of the wet. Ted, I'd no idea you could look so swell.

TED. There's the making of a fine idiot in meself, miss. Proceed.

SIERRA. Now I'm to look at you composedly, but not boldly, and say archly, "May I give you some tea, Mr. Emtehed?"

TED (*looking at paper*). Then we have a little fire of epigrams about cream and sugar, and I ask you if you care for the opera.

SIERRA (*talking very fast*). I'm devoted to Wagner — (*Aside.*) What a fib! — but care little for the Italian school. However, everything is so new to me — Oh, Ted, let's drop it!

TED. I'm agreeable.

SIERRA. And, Ted, I'm afraid you'd better go. Aunt may return.

TED. Go! Why, I've just come. Besides, your aunt

has never seen me. I only figure in her mind as an undesirable lover named Edward Ralston. Very good; if she returns, we'll brazen it out. Say I'm a long-lost cousin or a book agent.

SIERRA. You'll have to do the fibbing, Ted. I've told five fibs since breakfast, and my conscience aches.

TED. I'll attend to it. And now I'll settle up our account: fifteen minutes' interest on one kiss makes —

SIERRA. You can't collect it.

TED. Oh! can't I?

SIERRA. First catch your hare.

(Snatches up sofa pillow; runs out, followed by TED, They run in R., out L., in C., out R.)

SIERRA (coming in cautiously, R.). He missed me upstairs. I'm going to hide in the back hall, and when he comes I'll let this fly. (Tiptoes off, C.)

TED (stealing in, L.). Not here! (Takes slumber-pillows off of chair.) Now, then, look out, Sierra. (Tiptoes off, L.)

(Bell rings violently three times. Enter LADY GUINEVERE LLANDPOORE in travelling gown. She carries dressing-case, umbrella, and mackintosh. Speaks in timid, hesitating style.)

LADY G. Ahem! Is anybody home? (Comes forward; looks all about.) No one here. What a funny house! I rang, and rang, and rang. No one came. The cabby—I mean cabman—wouldn't wait. I couldn't sit on the steps like a beggar, so I came in. Mamma said I must expect unconventionality, but really— Well, I might as well sit down. (Sits R. of table, holding her bag and umbrella tightly.) I wish mamma had taken me with her; but papa's Irish tenants won't pay any rent, so it was cheaper to have me with Mrs. Ondego-Jhones. Besides, mamma was afraid we'd meet Cousin Chauncey. He has a gold mine, without any gold in it, out West—in Louisville, I fancy. Oh, I wish some one would come! Mamma says there is a niece, a Pawnee in petticoats, whom I am to study up, because men like Pawnees—in petticoats. I'm to learn American fascination in three— (Peals of laughter heard outside.) Gracious, some one coming! What did mamma tell me to say? Oh, I know! (Rises; comes forward smiling.) Mrs. Ondego-Jhones? So good of—

(*Pillow flies in R. E., lands at her feet. SIERRA follows it; stands aghast, staring at LADY G. Cushion flies in L. E., followed by TED, who is equally amazed. LADY G. drops bag and umbrella, turns in wonder from one to the other.*)

SIERRA. Oh, pray excuse us! We're having a little lark. Don't be frightened.

TED. Yes, that's all. No cause for alarm.

LADY G. (*frigidly*). Thanks. (To SIERRA.) Is Mrs. Ondego-Jhones at home?

SIERRA. No, not at present. Lady Guinevere Llandpoore, I presume. Let me present myself—Miss Bengaline, Mrs. Ondego-Jhones's niece.

LADY G. Charmed to meet you, Miss Bengaline. (Aside.) The fascinating Pawnee. (Brings SIERRA down front.) Please present me to that young gentleman. He spoke to me, and I can't answer until we are introduced. (Goes back c.; stands with her head carefully averted from TED.)

SIERRA (*aside*). Now, if I tell her his name, she'll tell aunt. What shall I do? (Goes to LADY G.) It's not customary over here, Lady Guinevere, to—er—to—

LADY G. To what? (Looks at TED.) Oh! I didn't notice his clothes before. He is the butler—

SIERRA (*interrupting*). That's the idea. And, as I say, it's not customary; but, to oblige you, I will present Larkins, my aunt's new butler, to you.

LADY G. (*sinking into a chair*). Introduced to a butler! What would mamma say?

TED (*amazed*). What is that? Come, I say—

SIERRA (*shaking her fist behind LADY G.*). 'Ssh! Do you, or do you not—er—buttle—for Mrs. Ondego-Jhones?

TED. Eh! Oh! (Laughing.) I do, mum.

SIERRA (*sternly*). Very good. Then carry Lady Guinevere's luggage to her room. The second story front.

TED. Yes, mum. (Picks up mackintosh, etc., goes toward door, c.)

LADY G. Stop a bit. Mamma said I was to give my brasses to—er—somebody, and have my boxes brought here.

SIERRA. Larkins, take Lady Guinevere's brasses, and telephone for a messenger to see after her boxes. (TED bows; comes back; takes checks.)

LADY G. (*timidly*). Stop a bit. (Takes out purse; gives TED a piece of silver. SIERRA laughs.)

TED. Thank you, your ladyship. (*Aside.*) Confound her impudence! (*Exit c.*)

LADY G. Miss Bengaline, is it possible that nice young man is a common butler?

SIERRA. Frankly, Lady Guinevere, he is a most uncommon one. His life is a perfect romance.

LADY G. How lovely! Tell it me. (*Aside.*) Now I'll study her.

SIERRA. All right. (*Aside.*) Isn't she prim? I'll take a rise out of her. (*Sits on sofa.*) First, you must know, he is the son of rich parents, who brought him up in the lap of luxury, sent him to Harvard, and then—er—

LADY G. (*drawing her chair nearer*). Died?

SIERRA. Thanks. Died when he was a mere infant.

LADY G. But I don't understand. Is Harvard a kindergarten?

SIERRA. Technically, no; but I mean a *legal* infant of twenty years; so he required a guardian, who in the basest way—er—er—

LADY G. Absconded? All Americans do.

SIERRA. Well, he didn't. He put all the money in an English swindle—an Orange Pekoe Trust, which went up the flume.

LADY G. Went where?

SIERRA. Up the flume—burst, smashed, crashed (*very fast*). So Ted—Larkins was ruined, and was opening oysters in a Bowery saloon, when aunt found him and brought him here. How does that strike you?

LADY G. It's beastly jolly—I mean highly entertaining. Now I understand the pillow fight. I must tell your aunt.

SIERRA (*springing up*). Oh, don't! Please don't.

LADY G. Why not? I admire her noble work of charity. At home he'd only have received outdoor relief or soup tickets.

SIERRA. But this is such a delicate case, Lady Guinevere, and my aunt is *so* modest about her charities. The least allusion would— You understand? (*Aside.*) Six fibs since breakfast. Oh, Sapphira!

LADY G. (*rising, goes to the table; sits*). If you think she'd be displeased, count on my silence.

SIERRA. Displeased is a mild word. Besides, aunt thinks pillow-fighting is hoydenish. (*Hunts under all the chairs for her chewing-gum, talking all the while.*) You see, papa

sent me East to be toned down, and aunt is doing her best ; but there's too much raw material in me to make a good society girl, and that's a fact. (*Finds gum, puts it in her mouth, sits on sofa, with her feet up.*)

LADY G. (*aside*). How easy she is! I wish I could do that. I'll ask her to teach me. (*To SIERRA, timidly.*) Miss Bengaline, I've a favor to ask. Don't think it strange, but will you teach me a little slang and fascination ?

SIERRA (*demurely*). Mixed or separate ?

LADY G. (*earnestly*). I fancy they always go together, for my brother Clarence says the American girls are perfectly fascinating, because you never can tell what they will do or say next. He says they are more fun than a box of monkeys.

SIERRA. Indeed. He's very *kind*.

LADY G. (*seriously*). Oh, Clarence knows ! So I thought if you'd kindly teach me a little, I might be more of a success when I go back.

SIERRA (*jumping up*). I'll do my best. Of course fascination isn't like acting. You can't learn it in six lessons. But if you will teach me English, I'll give you a little American dash. (*Aside.*) When I've finished, "a box of monkeys" won't be a circumstance to her.

LADY G. Then it's a bargain. Shall we begin now ?

SIERRA. Oh, no ! Wait till after lunch, when you are rested. Let me show you to your room. Now, then, Lady Guinevere, hook on.

LADY G. Do what ? And please call me Guinevere.

SIERRA. All right. Call me Sierra. (*Puts her arm around LADY G.*) That's hooking on. And now we'll make tracks for your room.

LADY G. (*triumphantly*). I've hooked on, and I'm making tracks.

(*GIRLS exeunt r. Bell rings violently several times. Enter CHAUNCEY OGLETHORPE. He looks about dubiously.*)

CHAUNCEY. Ahem ! Any one at home ? (*Looks all around ; listens ; smiles.*) What a lucky thing ! I'll have a bit of time to prepare my speech to Mrs. Ondego-Jhones and conquer my beastly bashfulness. (*Comes forward.*) Queer house ! Quite a paradise for tramps. Front door hospitably open ; no one in sight. (*Sits by table ; takes out letter.*) Mrs. Campell's note of introduction. Wish I de-

served half she says of me. Now, if I'm only not overtaken by an attack of shyness, all will go well. Very neat scheme. My revered aunt writes to know if I remain on my ranch all winter. I see the trap, reply, "Certainly; my partner is East, and I have to stay by our gold mine." Invite her to visit me. She then feels confident that Guinevere is secure from my attentions, and leaves her here. The day her ladyship starts West, I arrive here, present myself to Guinevere's hostess, make a favorable impression, make desperate love to Guinevere all winter, and when my aunt returns she will find her impecunious nephew established as her son-in-law elect. Lovely prospect! (*Rises; walks up and down.*) Bah! desperate love, I say. Don't I know that the minute a female appears I shall become a tongue-tied, stuttering idiot? I always do. What is there in a petticoat that induces total suspension of all my faculties? Then, again, how can I stay here all winter? Ralston thinks I'm in California, keeping my eye on that gold mine, minus the gold. I've a good notion to go back. The idea of meeting two strange females and Guinevere, and explaining things! Gad! it makes me burn all over. (*Lays letter on table, R. C.; takes off his top-coat; hangs it on chair, R.*) Jove! I'll step into this side room, and collect my senses. (*Exit L.*)

TED (*enters R.; sees coat and hat.*) That's a give-away. I'll remove that circumstantial evidence of my presence, and then write to Sierra. (*Catches up wraps; throws through R; exit; comes back; sits down by table.*) Now for my note. What will I write on? (*Sees letter left by CHAUNCEY.*) Ah! this will do—an old invitation. (*Tears off blank side; throws other under table; writes.*) "Dearest Sierra,—I can't keep up this idiotic deception any longer. Will not wait to see your aunt. Will keep my eye out for the red book. Can't you—" (*Looks up.*) Jove! some one coming. I'll go in the library.

(*Rushes off, R. Enter CHAUNCEY, L.*)

CHAUNCEY. I've got my speech on the tip of my tongue. It's rather neat, too. (*Comes forward, smiling.*) Ah! Mrs. Ondego-Jhones, I presume. Allow me—

(SIERRA *enters, c. He looks at her in horror; retreats backward to sofa, where he involuntarily sits down, still staring.*)

SIERRA. A strange man in a petrified condition. Who

is he, and what petrified him? Oh, I see! It's the butler from Mrs. Campell. Well, he sha'n't stay and interfere with Ted. (*To CHAUNCEY, haughtily.*) You've a note from Mrs. Campell?

CHAUNCEY (*rising; looks at floor.*) Yes. Mrs. Ondego-Jhones—I—Oh, no; too young—I—(*Aside.*) Confound it!

SIERRA. I am Miss Bengaline; but my aunt left full instructions in regard to you. (*Aside.*) She said ask the usual questions. What are the usual questions? Oh, I know! (*Sits by the table.*) Are you sober?

CHAUNCEY (*coming down front.*) She thinks I am intoxicated. I must explain. I'll make a bold effort. (*Turns suddenly to SIERRA.*) I'm as sober as you are.

SIERRA (*springing up*). What? How dare you address me so impertinently? That settles it. My aunt would never engage you. I will bid you good-morning, and advise you to remember that the first requisite in a butler is a respectful manner. (*Walks back to window.*)

CHAUNCEY. Butler? I? Oh, madam! there—is—a—mistake—I—er—I—(*Aside.*) I give up. (*Crosses R.; stands looking down, twisting his chain.*)

SIERRA (*coming down L. front.*) He's a lunatic. He can't meet my eye; can't keep his hands still; talks wildly. I must humor him. (*To CHAUNCEY.*) Some mistake you say. Didn't you come from Mrs. Campell?

CHAUNCEY (*aside*). The room is going around, and my tongue thickening. (*To SIERRA.*) Yes; I've a letter—a—a—letter, you know—a—you know—(*Aside.*) She thinks I'm a fool.

SIERRA. Poor fellow! He's very nice-looking. (*To CHAUNCEY.*) Allow me to see your letter.

CHAUNCEY (*rushes to table, stumbling over a chair; hunts for letter.*) Jove! it's gone!

SIERRA. The letter?

CHAUNCEY. Yes. Good-morning. Er—I'll call again—I'm far from well—I'm—er—er—feverish—Jove! my coat and hat are gone!

SIERRA. I'm horribly frightened.

CHAUNCEY (*coming down R. front. Aside.*). What must she think? I'll brace up, talk very loud and fast, and explain. (*Rushes to SIERRA; seizes her hand.*) Madam, I'm very shy—very shy—very, very, very shy—

SIERRA. Shy! Ted! Ted! Help!

TED (*runs in; pushes Chauncey away*). How dare you touch this young lady? Sierra, who is this fellow? (CHAUNCEY crosses R.)

SIERRA (*throws her arms about Ted*). Oh, Ted! I think he is crazy. Don't hurt him. Don't go near him.

TED. There, my dear, compose yourself. (Leads her to sofa.) Sit down, and I'll manage him. (Walks fiercely up to CHAUNCEY.) Now, sir!

CHAUNCEY (*turning*). Sir! Why, it's Ralston! Thank fortune.

TED. Chauncey Oglethorpe! By all that's wonderful!

CHAUNCEY. Let me explain. This horrible tangle is the last result of my dreadful shyness. Miss Bengaline mistook me for a butler or something—I don't quite understand what—and I tried to undeceive her, and now she mistakes me for a lunatic.

TED. What a joke! Why are you so bashful?

CHAUNCEY. I don't know. I was built that way; increasing crescendo from a timid child to a full-blown idiot, afraid to look a woman in the face.

TED. Poor old chap! Never mind. I'll settle matters. Come and be presented to Sierra. She's no end jolly. No stiffness about her.

CHAUNCEY. Oh, no! Let me sneak quietly away, and then you explain.

TED. Nonsense! (Drags him to SIERRA.) Sierra, let me introduce my partner, Chauncey Oglethorpe—a very much abused young man,

SIERRA (*rising*). Charmed to meet you, Mr. Oglethorpe. I've heard so much about you from Ted and your cousin Lady Guinevere that I regard you as an old friend. Pray forgive my extraordinary stupidity.

CHAUNCEY. Yes, thank you. It was stupid.

SIERRA. Now excuse me one moment, and I will tell Lady Guinevere you have arrived. (Exit c.)

CHAUNCEY. What a lovely girl! Has lots of tact. Don't stare a fellow out of countenance.

TED. Sierra is a trump. Have a cigarette, and be comfortable till she returns.

CHAUNCEY. Smoke here! What would Mrs. Ondego-Jhones say to that?

TED (*laughing*). She'd think it very friendly on the part of Lord Doncaster's son.

CHAUNCEY. Here goes, then. (*Lights cigarette.*) How about you? (*They sit by table.*)

TED. You don't understand. Mrs. Ondego-Jhones hasn't the pleasure of my acquaintance. I figure in her mind as a Western desperado, whom Sierra is to be separated from at all hazards. I am here clandestinely. Nice position, isn't it?

CHAUNCEY. By Jove! Ted, it's a pity she can't know you, barring impecuniosity. She'd be proud of you for a nephew-in-law.

TED. Thanks, very much. Speaking of impecuniousness, how did you leave our mine? Anything turned up?

CHAUNCEY. Yes; the men were turning up lots of dirt when I left last week, and the foreman said he thought he could manage to do the swearing for us both, so I left him, with a red and blue halo about him, watching the men work.

TED. Well, I feel sure there is gold there.

CHAUNCEY. Do you? By the by, have you seen my cousin?

TED. Yes. She took me for the butler, and Sierra didn't undeceive her. Now, aside from my clothes, do you think I look like a butler?

CHAUNCEY. No; you're not sedate enough. But, by Jove, an idea. Why don't you keep up the deception? Win your way into the aunt's heart, and keep near the niece all winter.

TED (*springing up*). My dear fellow, no power on earth would induce me to place myself in such a position. Imagine me opening the door, handing the kettle, and inquiring with a sickly grin, "Did you ring, madam?" (*Advances; meets MRS. ONDEGO-JHONES entering C.; stands in amazement.*)

MRS. O. Did I ring? I should think I did. You are—oh, I see—the butler from Mrs. Campell. Very fortunate. Please take my parcel. (*Hands him parcel; TED takes it silently.*)

CHAUNCEY (*rising. Aside*). What a joke! (*Crosses L.*)

MRS. O. (*advancing*). Mr. Oglethorpe, I presume. Yes. Mrs. Campell told me I should probably find you here. So pleased. Yes.

CHAUNCEY. Thanks—er—er— Will you pardon my smoking—er—

MRS. O. Don't mention it. I'm charmed to see you feel at home. Now, before we go any further, which is your hotel?

CHAUNCEY. The—er—St. James.

MRS. O. Very good. My man shall go right down and order your luggage sent here; for my house must be your home while you are in the city. As I said to Mrs. Campell, Lord Doncaster's son has every claim on my hospitality. Excuse me one minute. (*Goes to table; seats herself.*)

CHAUNCEY. You're very kind. (*Aside.*) She's easy enough to get on with. I wonder how she knows the governor? (*Sits on sofa; takes up paper.*)

MRS. O. (*to TED.*) Now, my good man, we'll very soon come to an understanding.

TED (*aside.*) Will we?

MRS. O. Whatever your terms, I agree to them; whatever stipulations you make, I agree. Having been to all the intelligence offices unsuccessfully, I am desperate. With a houseful of company, and a reception to-morrow, I *must* have a butler. What is your name?

TED (*muttering.*) What 'll I say?

MRS. O. Eh? Oh! Whuttlesay. How very peculiar! And yet how very English. (*CHAUNCEY bursts into a fit of laughter.*)

MRS. O. A joke, Mr. Oglethorpe?

CHAUNCEY. Yes, er—a good joke. (*Reads.*)

TED. Pardon me, madam, there is some misunderstanding.

MRS. O. Eh? Oh! not Whuttlesay? What then?

TED. Bother the name! I mean I cannot remain in your service. I'm not—not—sure I could—er—suit. I haven't—buttled for several years.

MRS. O. Buttled?

TED. Imperfect tense—I buttle, you buttle, he buttles, or is buttled. (*Aside.*) What am I talking about?

MRS. O. Ah! a new verb; an English revival, I presume. However, I understood you had been a valet.

TED. A valet?

CHAUNCEY. A valet! Jove!

MRS. O. And it makes no difference. You are very presentable, and I must have you for to-morrow. The maids shall attend to everything else, if you will only remain, and open the door and hand the kettle. You can leave the following day; but you must stay at present.

TED. (*Aside.*) I'll do it. (*Aloud.*) Very good, madam; to oblige you, I will, on the condition that I am free to do just what I choose and nothing else.

MRS. O. Then that is settled. (*Slips a bill into his hand.*) You'll find me practically grateful.

TED (*aside*). My second tip.

CHAUNCEY. He *said* no power on earth would make him do it.

MRS. O. Whucklesay, you may retire. Mr.—

(Enter LADY GUINEVERE and SIERRA, centre.)

MRS. O. Ah, my dear Lady Guinevere, welcome! So very pleased to see you again. I've a pleasant surprise for you. Mr. Oglethorpe has promised me a visit.

LADY G. You are very kind to me, Mrs. Ondego-Jhones. It is indeed a delightful surprise. (*Aside.*) What would mamma say? (*Crosses L. to CHAUNCEY, who is much embarrassed.*)

MRS. O. Mr. Oglethorpe, permit me to present you to my niece, Miss Bengaline.

CHAUNCEY. Thanks. We've—er—met before—

MRS. O. Indeed! Where?

SIERRA (*looking straight at CHAUNCEY*). I do not recollect meeting Mr. Oglethorpe.

CHAUNCEY (*aside*). Jove! I forgot. (*Aloud.*) Yes, I meant I had never seen anything like Miss Bengaline.

LADY G. Chauncey!

CHAUNCEY. I—er—meant I'd like to have seen—er—something like her—er—only I never had.

SIERRA. Aunt, who is the other young gentleman?

MRS. O. The other young gentleman is Whucklesay, the new butler.

SIERRA. Whucklesay? (*Aside.*) What a joke!

LADY G. (*to CHAUNCEY*). She said his name was Larkins.

CHAUNCEY. Hush!

MRS. O. Whucklesay, take my wraps. (*Gives him mantle, hat, muff.*) Now, young people, follow me to lunch; and if you notice any omissions, remember my establishment is settling down after a terrific domestic cyclone. Mr. Oglethorpe, please escort Lady Guinevere. Sierra, give me your arm.

(LADY G. and CHAUNCEY exit centre. MRS. O. and SIERRA follow. SIERRA kisses her hand to TED, who stands right of centre entrance. As curtain falls, he throws Mrs. O's wraps violently on floor; sinks into chair.

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The same.* Enter MRS. O., SIERRA, LADY G., CHAUNCEY, centre. LADY G. and CHAUNCEY come down L., front.

MRS. O. Now I must leave you. I've a mothers' meeting, four teas, and two receptions to attend before dinner. Sierra, I leave you to entertain Lady Guinevere and Mr. Oglethorpe.

SIERRA. Yes, aunt. Drive—

MRS. O. (*aside*). Do not say drive on. Study Lady Guinevere. Observe her air of well-bred repose, her careful language. (*Aloud*) Lady Guinevere, you must allow Sierra to show you my old masters. Mr. Oglethorpe, you will find my billiard table in perfect order. Sierra, remember! *Au revoir!*

ALL. *Au revoir!* (*Exit MRS O., c.*)

SIERRA. Do you want to see the old masters, Guinevere? They're patent Americans, you know. (*Sits R. of table. CHAUNCEY and LADY G. on sofa.*)

LADY G. Patent American? Old masters?

SIERRA. Yes: copies, you know. Kept up a chimney until they're sooty enough. They are all made in Nassau Street.

LADY G. How clever you Americans are!

SIERRA. Yes; we're all here. Mr. Oglethorpe, the cushions of aunt's table are as dead as Moses. She can't play a little bit. Shall we have a game?

CHAUNCEY (*looking sentimentally at GUINEVERE*). Just as you say, Miss Bengaline. But—er—why—not—simply —talk?

SIERRA. Yes; let's. I only asked because aunt suggested it.

MRS. O. (*appears c., in walking costume*). I'm off, young people. Enjoy yourselves. Oh, these wretched social duties! Lady Guinevere, your trun—er—boxes have been carried to your room. Good-by.

ALL (*rising*). Good-by. (*Exit MRS. O.*)

SIERRA. Oh, Guinevere, do let me help you unpack your "trunk boxes," and show me your London gowns? Mr. Oglethorpe, will you excuse us a few minutes?

CHAUNCEY. With pleasure.

LADY G. Chauncey!

CHAUNCEY. Well, I—er—didn't mean—

SIERRA. We can imagine what you meant. Let me assuage your grief with papers—English, French, American. (*Lays papers on table.*) Now have a cigarette, and make yourself at home till we return. (*GIRLS exeunt C.*)

CHAUNCEY. A very nice little girl. She knows what a fellow likes after lunch—solitude, smoke, and news. (*Lights cigarette. Sits R. of table. Enter TED cautiously, L.*)

TED. Is the missus off?

CHAUNCEY. Yes; and the girls upstairs.

TED (*sitting left of table*). Then I will have a little vacation. Well, isn't this the jolliest mix? How did you think I got on at luncheon?

CHAUNCEY. I was amazed at your cheek. Every time Miss Bengaline brought out that Whuttlesay with such gusto, I nearly collapsed. Indeed, between my guilty knowledge of your identity and my consummate bashfulness, I imagine Mrs. Ondego-Jhones considers me a donkey.

TED. Nonsense! All you need is confidence.

CHAUNCEY. Confidence! How am I to get it? I was born with my foot in my mouth, instead of a silver spoon. I wish you could give me a little audacity, and show me how you manage women.

TED. That's easy.

CHAUNCEY. Easy! Why, fifty times I've been on the verge of getting off a proposal to Guinevere. Led up to it neatly; really been almost coherent, you know; only to stand at the last moment gaping, with my mouth open, because she looked at me.

TED. Well, you must get more confidence, and learn diplomacy. Instead of letting her disconcert you, you must embarrass her. The way to win a woman is to—

CHAUNCEY. Yes; go on.

TED. Never let her feel certain of you; play her like a trout; tantalize her; lead her on; when she grows warm, cool off; when she comes forward, retreat. Be fascinating, but a little out of her reach. When she is wrought up to the proper point, propose, and she's yours.

CHAUNCEY. Is that how you won Miss Bengaline?

TED (*meditatively*). Well, no. But it's the way she won me, and it is a splendid theory. Poor rule that won't work both ways, you know.

CHAUNCEY. Do you fancy I could do that kind of thing?

TED. Certainly. All you need is a little practice to give you confidence. I'll show you. Courtship made easy. Here. (*Pins afghan about his waist; sits on sofa, fanning himself with newspaper.*) Now, then, I'm a perfect lady. Imagine me Lady Guinevere, and propose to me.

CHAUNCEY. You're a trump, Ted. (*Goes to door.*) Now watch me lead up to my point gracefully. (*Comes forward.*) Good-evening, Guinevere. I've been waiting two years to say something.

TED (*coquettishly*). Oh, Chauncey!

CHAUNCEY. Well, I have. I love you; be my wife.

TED. Is that your idea of "leading up to it"? You'd frighten her into saying no. Allow me. (*Pins afghan on CHAUNCEY.*) Now, then, let me show you my ideas. (*CHAUNCEY sits on sofa.* TED crosses R. *Coming forward.*) Ah, Guinevere, how fortunate to find you alone! Thought I'd drop in a moment on my way to the A's and B's and C's. Horrid grind, society! That will give her the idea you are much sought after, and the instant a girl thinks you a social exotic, she wants you.

CHAUNCEY. I see. Can't you make it two minutes, or do you think time spent with a cousin is wasted? (*Fans himself, looks at TED coquettishly.*)

TED (*sentimentally*). Time spent with you, Guinevere, goes all too fast. Are you going to the curling match? After a compliment, put on the brake with a commonplace remark. That whets the feminine appetite.

CHAUNCEY. I see; caviare, as it were. Where were we? Oh, I recollect! I'm afraid you are a sad flatterer.

TED. Truth cannot flatter. That's old, but invaluable. (*Takes CHAUNCEY'S hand.*) What an exquisite bangle! Turkish, is it not? May I examine it?

CHAUNCEY. It's wished on.

TED (*sitting beside CHAUNCEY on sofa*). Wished on? By whom?

CHAUNCEY (*shyly*). My mamma.

TED. Oh, that's all right. Dear little hand!

CHAUNCEY. Oh, you needn't hold my hand.

TED. Give me the right to.

CHAUNCEY (*with great artlessness*). How?

TED (*putting arm around CHAUNCEY*). Give me yourself. Then your hand is my hand, and a man has a perfect right to hold his own hand. That's logic.

CHAUNCEY. Logic; it's impudence.

TED. Same thing. You love me, darling, don't you? Say that as a matter of course. Women like the masterful style of wooing.

CHAUNCEY (*laughing*). Do you love me?

TED (*laughing*). I adore you. (*Kisses CHAUNCEY*.) Is it yes?

CHAUNCEY. Ask mamma. (*Jumps up*.) Jove! I wish Guinevere were here now! I'd just fire off my proposal like a ton of brick.

TED. New way of wooing, eh? Well, good-luck to you, old fellow, when you do meet her. Why don't you do it to-morrow evening? Ask her to waltz; then get her into the conservatory. There's everything in the surroundings.

CHAUNCEY. I'll do it. Say, Ted, if it's not too much of a bore, show me how to "back" my partner without tearing her dress to ribbons, and making her my enemy for life.

TED. All right.

(*Whistles waltz. They dance round the stage, CHAUNCEY tripping over afghan. GIRLS heard laughing.*)

TED. The girls! Your cousin mustn't find me here.

(*Exeunt CHAUNCEY and TED R. Enter GIRLS c.*)

SIERRA. Guinevere, the modest, shrinking air with which you sling slang is simply convulsing.

LADY G. I know I don't—er—sling it very well yet, but I mean to learn. Mamma says it's time we girls rallied around our young peers, and saved the honor of old England. Do you know, Sierra (*tragically*), there's hardly a marriageable duke left. All snapped up by the Americans; and now they're commencing on our rich commoners.

SIERRA. How greedy! (*Sits on table; swings her feet*.) We get there every time, though.

GUINEVERE (*aside*). How fascinating! (*To SIERRA*.) Let me do that too. (*Sits by SIERRA on table, imitating every motion*.) Do please teach me fascination.

SIERRA (*aside*). Now for a circus. (*Aloud*.) It's very hard to be fascinating in cold blood with a female, but I'll do my best, because I cottoned to you from the first. Sabe?

LADY G. (*timidly*). I'm on to your lead. Is that right?

SIERRA. You're getting on like a house afire. (*Aside*.) How pleased her brother will be!

LADY G. Thanks, dear. But there's something wrong yet. When I told your aunt her cook wasn't any slouch at an omelet, she seemed really thunder-struck. Yet Clarence told me that *slouch* was a common American expression.

SIERRA. It is. About as *common* as a word can be. You're right there. How I would like to meet your brother! As I cannot, suppose you play his part, and I'll entertain you in real American style, so you can see the true inwardness of our resemblance to a box of monkeys. (*Goes off C.*)

LADY G. How charming she is! But I'm learning. (*Enter SIERRA*.) Good-evening, Miss Bengaline.

SIERRA (*rushing up, shakes hands violently*). Hulloa! how goes it? Ma is out, and pa has his coat off. Besides, he's got a pipe, a bottle of whiskey, and a dime novel, and is making ready for an intellectual treat in the dining-room. Moreover, the girl is giving his celluloid collar a bath. But we don't care, do we?

LADY G. (*laughing*). Oh, how funny! Do you girls really say such things? (*Sits on sofa*.)

SIERRA. Please remember you are your brother.

LADY G. What would he say?

SIERRA. He would probably stick his monocle in his eye, look as though he was trying to recollect an idea left him by his grandfather, and say — nothing, unless he could manage some nice little compact repartee, such as "Gad!" or "Moses!"

LADY G. Yes, I fancy Clarence would say "Moses!"

SIERRA. Of course. Ever so many Englishmen come to papa's ranch. I know their style.

LADY G. Well, I'll be Clarence again. Moses! Did you ever hear — oh! Thingummy — you know the opera that German beggar wrote, three old ladies playing with a clothes-line, three fates, or something, by — Wagner. Do you like that sort of thing?

SIERRA. You've got that down fine. Now watch, Guinevere, I'm going to let monkey No. 1 out of the box. (*Jumps*

up.) Like Wagner! Never while there's a cat left to our back fence. I like tunes, with dances in between each verse, and real funny words, like this. (*Sings:*)

AIR — *Money Musk.*

"The English nose is out of joint;
The English joke has lost its point;
The English girl is weeping;
The American girl is all the go;
The American girl is far from slow,
In English barriers leaping."

(*Dances few steps of breakdown; throws herself into a chair R. of table.*)

SIERRA. There! A tune like that snatches Wagner bald-headed.

LADY G. Jove! Is that right?

SIERRA. Correct. Now, then, Guinevere, I'll let monkey No. 2 out of the box. Waltz up, and I'll show you how to play poker. (*LADY G. waltzes stiffly to table.*)

SIERRA (*laughing*). Waltz up is slang, my dear. A charming Americanism for approach.

LADY G. (*sits opposite SIERRA*). Oh! Then let me write it down. (*Takes out tablets; writes.*) "Snatch Wagner bald-headed. Waltz up." I've quite a nice little list.

SIERRA (*dealing cards. Aside*). I haven't the faintest idea of how poker is played, and my imagination is nearly exhausted. (*To GUINEVERE.*) We each have eleven cards, match all we can, and put our money on the—er—pot.

LADY G. Where is the pot?

SIERRA. The pot? Oh, that's a term derived from pot-luck, meaning that you plank your pile on whatever happens along. Plank your pile means invest your funds.

LADY G. I see—at least I'm on to the game! I got that off nicely, didn't I?

SIERRA. Yes: you're as bright as a red wagon.

LADY G. Thanks, dear. Are your feet crossed? (*Looks under table.*)

SIERRA (*crossing her feet*). Certainly. American girls always cross their feet, plant one hand on their hip thus (*suits action to word*), talk at the top of their nasal voices, contradict their elders, say "I guess," and laugh incessantly

That is the groundwork of the fascination which makes them (*sarcastically*) more fun than a box of monkeys.

LADY G. (*imitates SIERRA'S pose. Takes up tablets; reads.*) Now for the game, ante up, and watch me snake the pot.

SIERRA (*laughing*). Good!

LADY G. Oh, I'm learning. (*Consults tablets; throws pair of kings on table.*) Get on to those, and fork over the woodie.

SIERRA. What? Guinevere, where *did* you get those -those expressions?

LADY G. Out of an English novel called *The Western Belle; A Prairie Romance*. The heroine talks that way. Isn't it right?

SIERRA. Right? Oh, certainly, beautiful! How pleased your brother will be with your progress!

LADY G. (*innocently*). Yes. Won't he?

SIERRA. Undoubtedly. Suppose we don't play any more poker. I will teach you that gem of a song. (*Rises; comes down front.*) My pupil is so far ahead. I shall have to retire.

LADY G. (*joining her*). Yes; do teach me the song.

(*They put arms about each other; dance; singing, "The English nose is out of joint," etc. TED and CHAUNCEY enter; stop in amazement, R.*)

CHAUNCEY. My proper cousin!

TED. Sierra singing a "patter" song! (*GIRLS stop L.*)

LADY G. Chauncey with the romantic butler!

TED (*crossing to SIERRA*). Sierra, what are you up to? (*They retire up to window.*)

LADY G. (*crossing to CHAUNCEY*). The butler called her Sierra. Did you hear?

CHAUNCEY. Hush! He isn't a butler.

LADY G. No? Who is he?

CHAUNCEY. My partner, Edward Ralston, disguised. The aunt don't know him.

LADY G. How romantic!

SIERRA (*coming forward with TED*). Guinevere, Mr. Ralston desires to be presented to you in his proper character. (*TED bows.*)

LADY G. (*timidly holding out her hand*). Shake, old chap.

TED. Pardon?

LADY G. (*confused*). I mean, put it there, pard.

TED (*amazed*). Certainly. (*Shakes hands.*)

SIERRA. Ted, I want you one moment. (*They retire to piano. SIERRA sits down, playing softly while TED talks to her.*)

CHAUNCEY. Guinevere, it's not my affair, you know, but where did you pick up those dreadful words?

LADY G. They are not dreadful. Mamma said I was to acquire a little American fascination, so I could captivate a duke.

CHAUNCEY. Do you want to captivate a duke?

LADY G. No; but I must obey mamma.

CHAUNCEY. Only till you—er—marry. Look here, Guinevere—look here—(*tying his handkerchief into knots*) —I—I—want to—to tell you something.

LADY G. Yes, Chauncey.

CHAUNCEY (*desperately*). I'm—I—I love you. I know you think I'm a stammering idiot. I know you won't have me. I don't wonder. I wouldn't were I you. I'm shy and poor, my gold mine won't pan out, and oh, Guinevere, say it quickly!

LADY G. Say what?

CHAUNCEY. No.

LADY G. (*shyly*). I'd much rather say yes.

CHAUNCEY. You dear lovely girl! (*Kisses her.*)

LADY G. Chauncey! Think of Sierra and Mr. Ralston!

CHAUNCEY. Oh, they're engaged themselves. Miss Bengaline, Ed, congratulate me. Guinevere accepts me.

SIERRA (*coming forward*). I do congratulate you both.

TED. And I. (*Brings CHAUNCEY down front.*) Did you try my receipt?

CHAUNCEY. No. I shut my eyes, and dived in, and Guinevere landed me.

SIERRA. Young people, I propose a grand celebration of this happy event. What shall it be—music, dancing, charades?

LADY G. Charades; and Chauncey and I will be audience. (*Sits on sofa; CHAUNCEY follows.*)

SIERRA. Very good. Come, Ted. (*To TED*) It's the only kindness we can show them, to leave them alone. (*Exit TED and SIERRA, R.*)

CHAUNCEY. Guinevere, I'm the happiest fellow alive. What a relief to have the proposal over!

LADY G. (*innocently*). Yes ; isn't it ?

CHAUNCEY (*taking her hand*). Dear little hand. (*Bell rings.*)

LADY G. They're ready. Let go my hand.

TED (*entering R.*). Lady and dear old chap, you are now invited to witness a performance unequalled in the annals of the stage. Two artists, unassisted by scenery, will act out a word of four syllables in one scene, which requires twenty-four characters, a chorus, a village green, a raging ocean, and a blood-hound. (*Bows. Exit R.*)

CHAUNCEY. Jove ! how he rattles on ! I wish I was clever.

LADY G. You are clever, Chauncey. I don't like men who are so awfully talkative.

SIERRA (*from door*). Ready ?

LADY G. Let her go (*consults tablets*), Gallagher !

TED AND SIERRA (*skip on, hand in hand; dance around stage, singing*). We are the chorus. We are the chorus. Tra-la-la-la, tra-la-la-la. (*Stop R. front.*)

TED. In the absence of scenery, kindly imagine a village green surrounded by spreading oaks. In the—er—bosky shade, happy tenantry drinking air with gusto out of paper-mugs, while the oldest inhabitant, in a white smock, explains the situation to his son's wife. Is that clear ?

LADY G. Yes ; do go on.

TED (*in high, piping voice*). Ees, ma dear ; it's a great day for me. I's ployed with t'owd squoire w'en ee were a lad, and now 'is son is a-comin' back to the old 'ouse. 'Tis a joyful day — a joyful day for I, oo is a undered and fifty-two come Lady-day. (*Weeps.*)

SIERRA. There, Father Hodge, don't ee be choildish. Sit ye in the shade, hand 'ave a mug o' beer. Young squoire, ee won't forgit ye. Ee'll be 'ere directly with his sweet'art, Lady Clare, and 'is wicked cousin. A bad lot, that wicked cousin — a bold, bad willian.

TED. Now we are the chorus again. (*Takes SIERRA'S hand. Both cry together.*) Hurray ! Hurray ! Hurray for the young squire !

TED. Now, I'm the young squire, and Sierra is my sweet-heart. (*They go back, come down smiling and bowing to imaginary chorus.*)

TED. Thanks for your hearty welcome, my honest friends. I'm rejoiced to be among you again. It's a pity my father

is not alive to see this day ; on the other hand, if he were, I could not decently inherit the estate. It's a poor heart that never rejoices ; so enjoy yourselves. There's a roasted ox in the foreground, and unlimited beer and skittles in the background. Kindly take yourselves off, and leave me to propose to Lady Clare. (*Waves his hand. Exit chorus.*)

SIERRA. Dear Alphonse, come and sit under the shade of this noble tree, where the lime-light will reach us, and tell me about your travels.

TED (*leading her to chair*). Darling Clare, the lime-light is full upon us, the music is softly throbbing, the time and the hour are here, and I am man enough to do my duty. I love you, darling. Will you be the young squire's bride ?

SIERRA. I have always adored you.

TED. Thanks. I thought you did. I will now leave you to your inevitable soliloquy. (*Exit R.*)

SIERRA (*theatrically clasping her hands*). He loves me ! Happy girl ! But no, I feel a sudden thrill. Such happiness cannot last. Ah ! here comes the wicked cousin. Why does he so darksомely pursue me ?

(Enter TED, *his coat collar turned up; high hat on.*)

TED. At last ! (*Springs to SIERRA; grasps her by the arm.*) Listen, girl ! I love you ! Nay, start not ! I've just murdered your uncle. Near his rigid form I dropped a handkerchief, a collar button, an overcoat, and other articles of wearing apparel, marked with the name of my puling cousin, your lover.

SIERRA (*falling on her knees*). Cruel man ! Let me fly to remoye them !

TED. Not so, unless you marry me. In that case you may. Thwart me, and I accuse him before the whole village. I love you darkly, desperately, madly !

SIERRA. Oh, this is fearful ! But know, proud ruffian, that not to save my darling's life would I consent to tell a lie. I defy you !

CHAUNCEY (*applauding*). Hooray ! Good for you ! I am the gallery, Miss Bengaline.

SIERRA. Thanks.

TED. Now all the characters are on the stage ; I am still the villain. Ah ! defy me ? Ho, everybody ? This wretch, my cousin, has murdered his benefactor in cold blood. By his victim's corpse you will find the evidence.

SIERRA. Now I faint.

TED. Yes, in my arms. And the curtain falls on a grand tableau. (SIERRA falls into his arms.) Now, what is the word?

MRS. O. (enters c.). The word is disgusting, atrocious!

SIERRA (springs away from TED). Aunt!

TED. Now for it.

MRS. O. Whucklesay, retire. Sierra, are you crazy? Lady Guinevere, what must you think?

LADY G. I think it's lovely.

CHAUNCEY. Yes. But what was the word?

SIERRA. Aunt, you don't understand; it was a charade.

MRS. O. (sinking into a chair). Charades with a butler! Whucklesay, leave the room.

SIERRA. Do go, Ted.

TED. No, Sierra; I will not.

MRS. O. He calls her *Sierra*!

CHAUNCEY. What a jolly row!

TED. My name is not Whucklesay, Mrs. Ondego-Jhones, nor am I a butler.

SIERRA (shutting her eyes). It's coming.

TED. My name is Edward Ralston, and you must not blame Sierra. The misapprehension arose from a perhaps not unnatural mistake on your part.

SIERRA. It's all my fault. Don't blame Ted, aunt.

MRS. O. Edward Ralston! How could I have been so stupid? Sierra, you need not bristle up. I am charmed indeed to meet Mr. Ralston. (Shakes TED's hand.)

TED (bewildered). You're very good.

SIERRA. She must be delirious.

TED. You did say you were charmed to meet me?

MRS. O. Yes; and I meant it. Sierra's father has withdrawn his opposition, which was only based on pecuniary grounds, you know, and which vanish now your circumstances are altered so wonderfully.

TED. Who altered them? What are they? Oh, somebody is crazy!

SIERRA. What do you mean, aunt?

MRS. O. Is it possible? Yes; I see. Well, let me be the one to announce the news. As I went out, the postman handed me this letter (*holds up letter*) from Mr. Bengaline. Come around me, young people, and I will read it.

(CHAUNCEY and LADY G. stand left of MRS. O.; TED and SIERRA right.)

MRS. O. (*opening letter*). I've just sold 20,000 head of long-horned—No, that's not it.

ALL. Go on.

MRS. O. "The Republican triumph"—um—"present state of the tariff"—er—Ah! here it is.

ALL. Yes; do go on.

MRS. O. "The sudden find of a new lead in the Sierra Gold Mine, owned jointly by Edward Ralston and Chauncey Oglethorpe"—

TED. Gold at last!

CHAUNCEY. Jove! it *has* panned out!

MRS. O. (*smiling*). Wait! (*Reads*) "Has produced a state of excitement in the country which has not been equalled since '49. The superintendent has sent to San Francisco for more machinery, and telegraphed the lucky partners to come home. Speculators have already bid \$600,000 for the mine. There is not an inch of ground for sale near the Sierra, and the excitement is intense."

TED. Hurray! We're millionnaires! Sierra, you're my mascot!

CHAUNCEY. This will fetch your mother, Guinevere.

MRS. O. Wait! (*Reads*) "Of course, now I will not oppose Sierra's engagement, as Ralston is a delightful young fellow." Now, my dears, isn't this a romance?

SIERRA (*kissing her*). Oh, aunt, I'm so happy.

TED. Yes, *aunt*, we're so happy! I'll run on to-night, get things in working order, return in four weeks, and then for a wedding. Eh, Sierra?

SIERRA. Oh, Ted, we mustn't be rash! We'll wait a long, long time—say *five* weeks. (*They retire up*.)

MRS. O. (*rising*). Mr. Oglethorpe, I congratulate you heartily.

CHAUNCEY. Thanks. I shall go on with Ralston, return with him, be married on the same day—

LADY G. You forget mamma.

MRS. O. My dear, your mamma can have no reasonable objection to a son-in-law worth at least half a million.

SIERRA (*coming forward*). Then you forgive us, *aunt*?

MRS. O. I saw through the whole thing from the first,

you foolish children. Ah! you need not look incredulous. Two can play at deception.

LADY G. (*to CHAUNCEY*). What a tarradiddle! She was furious over that charade.

CHAUNCEY. I should say so. By the way, Ted, what was that wonderful word of yours?

TED. Why, Melodrama.

MRS. O. Melodrama? Very clever too, if I can judge by the little I saw.

SIERRA. Yes, I thought you seemed pleased.

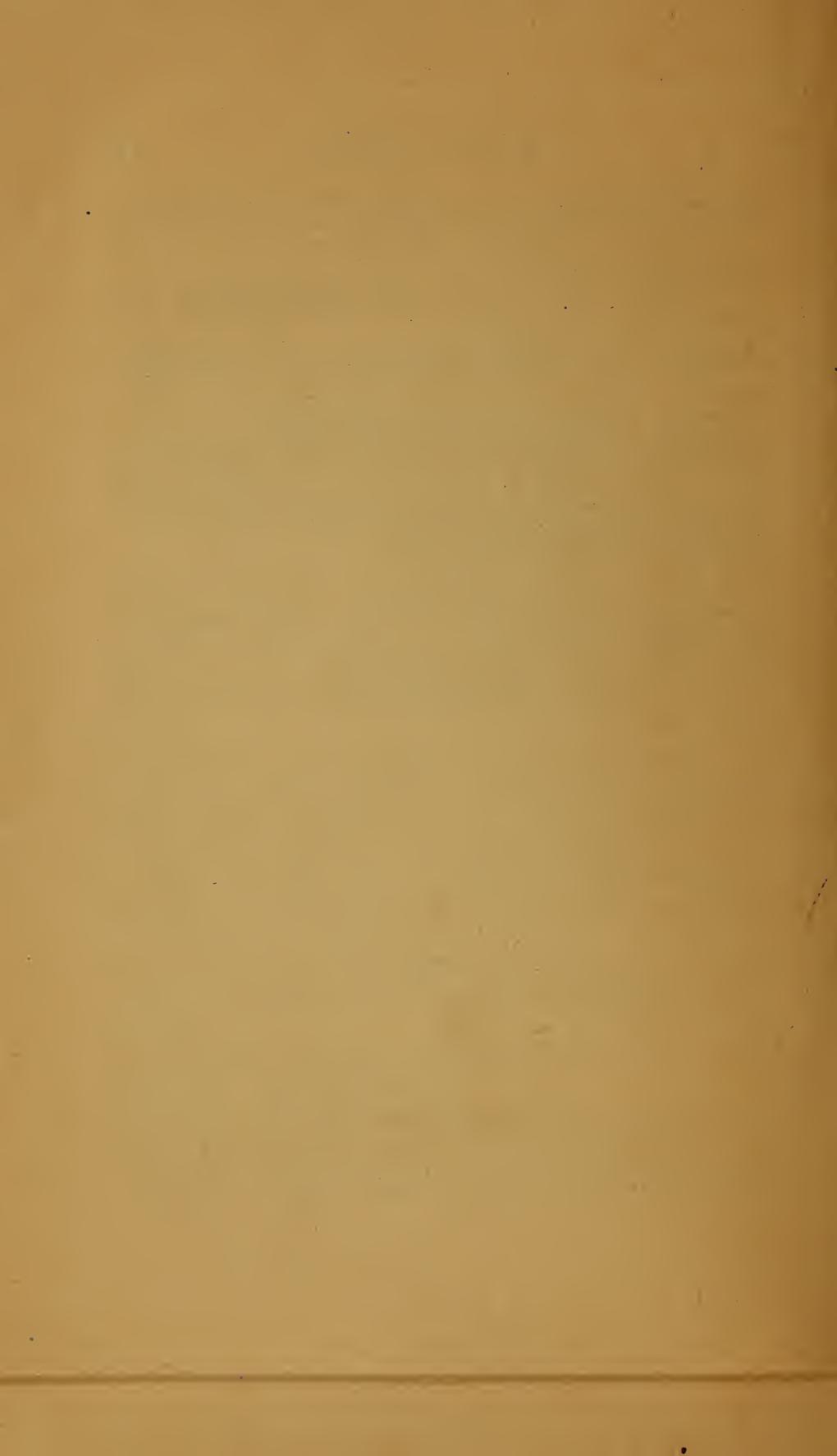
MRS. O. I was. And how very appropriate, as our little drama ends in the good old-fashioned melodramatic style—all the lovers united, everybody rich, and the hard-hearted guardian bestowing her blessing thus (*holds out her hands*), so as to make a good curtain picture.

MRS. O., c.

CHAUNCEY. LADY G.

TED. SIERRA.

QUICK CURTAIN.



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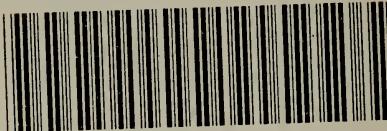
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